quickly and efficiently search for steganographic markings, resolving the steganographic information using a database, and generating reports for owners/distributors in the process.

The foregoing and additional features and advantages of the invention will be more readily apparent from the following detailed description, which proceeds with reference to the accompanying drawings.—

In the Claims:

2. (Amended) A method for surveying distribution of proprietary empirical data sets, such as audio, image, or video data, on computer sites accessible via the internet, comprising:

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, automatically screening same to identify the potential presence of identification data steganographically [embedded] **encoded** therein;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets screened by said screening operation, discerning identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein; and

generating a report identifying steganographically **encoded** empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded.

11. (Amended) A method for surveying distribution of proprietary empirical data sets on computer sites accessible via the internet, comprising:

providing a master code signal useful for detecting steganographic coding within empirical data sets;

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, discerning certain identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein, said discerning employing said master code signal as a decoding key; and

generating a report identifying steganographically **encoded** empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded.

Please add new claims as follows:

--12. The method of claim 10 which includes automatically screening each of a plurality of said empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, to identify the potential presence of identification data steganographically encoded therein and, for those data sets that pass said screening process, discerning identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein.

13. The method of claim 10 in which said master code signal has the appearance of unpatterned snow if represented in the pixel domain.

14. The method of claim 10 in which said discerning of identification data from said downloaded empirical data is accomplished without previous knowledge of the audio, image, or video information represented thereby.

15. The method of claim 10 which includes identifying proprietors of empirical data sets by reference to identification data steganographically discerned therefrom, and reporting to said proprietors the sites from which their empirical data sets were downloaded.

16. The method of claim 14 in which said identification data includes information in addition to data identifying said proprietor, and the method includes providing said additional data to said proprietors.